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**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** March 21, 2017

Dear Planning Participant:

The Malheur National Forest – Blue Mountain Ranger District, and the Umatilla National Forest – North Fork John Day Ranger District are initiating the 30-day scoping period for the Ragged Ruby Project. The proposed action includes upland restoration activities; watershed, fisheries, and wildlife restoration; prescribed burning; road activities; and recreation system changes within the approximately 34,000-acre planning area. The overall purpose of the project is to restore forest resiliency and function. The planning area is located approximately 9 miles north of Prairie City, Oregon in the Granite Boulder Creek and Balance Creek subwatersheds.

I would like to thank those of you who have participated in developing the proposed action. The information, ideas, and concerns we have received about this project have helped shape and define the proposed action. The scoping package containing the proposed action descriptions and maps is available on the Malheur National Forest website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49392>.

The next step is to analyze this proposal under a formal environmental review. To help determine the scope of that review and start the analysis, I am requesting your comments, which will be used to help develop alternatives to the proposed action and identify analysis issues. Your comments will be most helpful if they focus specifically on issues pertaining to the proposed action and environmental consequences of the proposed action.

### **Timeline**

There will be an additional opportunity to comment on the Ragged Ruby Project in 2018 during the 45-day comment period on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). There will also be a 45-day objection filing period during 2018, pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218, Subpart A. Only individuals and organizations who have submitted specific written comments related to the proposed Ragged Ruby Project during a designated opportunity for public comment may file an objection (36 CFR 218.5(a)).

### **Open House**

The Blue Mountain Ranger District will hold an open house on Wednesday, April 12, 2017, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the Grant County Regional Airport Conference Room, 720 Airport Road, John Day, OR 97845. Participants will have the opportunity to contribute information, ideas, or concerns, and discuss the project with members of the project's interdisciplinary team. From 5:00 to 6:00 pm the format will be an open house style with members of the interdisciplinary team available to answer questions about the project. At 6:00 pm there will be a group round robin session with participants afforded the opportunity to share what they most value about the planning area and what they would like to see happen as part of the project. We hope that you can attend the meeting; if you cannot attend and wish to be involved, please see below on how to submit comments.



## How to Comment

Your comments can help us design a better project, make us aware of issues we do not know about, and in general, help us do a better job of planning. The scoping period will begin when the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement is published in the Federal Register. The publication date is anticipated to be March 23 or 24, 2017; therefore, to be most useful, comments on this proposed action should be received by the Blue Mountain Ranger District on or before April 24, 2017 (due to the end of the 30 days falling on a weekend). The exact publication date in the Federal Register can be obtained by checking the Federal Register (<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/index.html>) or the Forest's website (see above) for the exact date that the NOI is published. The publication date in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the scoping period for this proposal. Those wishing to comment should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source, including the estimation above.

Written comments concerning the project may be submitted using the following methods:

- Postal mail or hand delivery: Blue Mountain Ranger District, c/o Sasha Fertig, 431 Patterson Bridge Road / PO Box 909, John Day, OR 97845 (if hand delivering, submit during business hours 8:00am to 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays)
- E-mail message: [comments-pacificnorthwest-malheur-bluemountain@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-malheur-bluemountain@fs.fed.us)
- Fax: 541-575-3319

Written comments must include:

- Your name
- Address
- Telephone number (if possible)
- Organization represented (if any) or private citizen
- Title of document on which the comment is being submitted
- Specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that you believe the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision
- Signature (For objection eligibility each individual or representative from each entity must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request. In cases using an e-mail, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.)

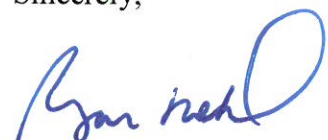
Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered, but will not allow for standing to object to the project. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Requests for confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances.



For further information, please contact Sasha Fertig (NEPA Planner) by phone at 541-575-3061 or by email at [sashafertig@fs.fed.us](mailto:sashafertig@fs.fed.us).

Thank you for your interest in the Malheur National Forest.

Sincerely,

  
for STEVEN K. BEVERLIN  
Forest Supervisor